

# Meet Duxbury

## **John Heinstadt** **School Committee member, retired**

BY: JP O'NEIL,  
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**On May 20, 2015 Heinstadt was recognized with the  
Community Volunteer Award at a Ceremony  
that took place at The Village in Duxbury.**

This past March was the end to John Heinstadt's fourth and final term on the school committee. Heinstadt first ran in 2001 while he had three boys in the school system.

At that time there was a lot of controversy about punishment that would be handed out to the high school kids, mostly involving marijuana.

"My wife was teaching social studies at the high school, and kept hearing a lot of complaints about the rules," Heinstadt said. "She said to me 'well why don't you run?' I had background in higher education, so I thought why not? I believed I could bring a fresh perspective on how to make things better."

The school committee election takes place each March, with two committee members being elected one year, two elected the next year and then one the third year. The process of elections will then repeat. So at any given time, there is always five committee members.

The first time Heinstadt ran he went against a woman. He ran unopposed during the second and third terms.

"In the second term we started working on the plan for the new middle school/high school so I wanted to stay to see that come to fruition," Heinstadt said. "So that's why I stayed for 12 years."



**Heinstadt wanted to stay on the school committee  
long enough to see the opening of the new  
Duxbury High School/Middle School.**

Heinstadt also served as chair in 2003, 2005, and 2014.

“My role as chair was chairing the meetings, coordinating with the superintendent between meetings and deciding, along with the superintendent, the meeting agenda,” Heinstadt said. “It’s not as if the chairman has that much more power than any of the other members.” The school committee has its power in the areas of approving the budget, setting policies, and hiring/firing the superintendent. “As far to the day to day operations of the school, that

Continued on page [3](#)

Continued from page [1](#)

is left to the superintendent and principal,” Heinstadt said. “We only meet once a month most of the year, besides two times a month in November and December when we are doing the budget.”

Heinstadt received his Bachelors degree in civil engineering from Manhattan College, in New York City. Upon his college graduation, Heinstadt joined the U.S. Navy on active duty for four years from 1970-1974.

“In general I was in the SEABEES which was the naval construction force,” Heinstadt said. “I worked on construction in every continent.”

Heinstadt’s most memorable time in the Navy was his six-month stint in Antarctica.

“We were in the South Pole during the summer time there,” he said. “The temperature got up to 0 degrees. On the day we left it was 52 below, without the wind chill factor. We were building a geometric dome for scientific experimentation.”

After the Navy, Heinstadt came back to Massachusetts to begin his career.

**“I first started teaching civil engineering at Wentworth,” Heinstadt said. “Later on I decided to get my law degree and moved to the business office as the Chief Financial Institutor. I did that for the last 20 years before recently retiring.” A typical day at Wentworth for Heinstadt consisted of working on budgets, physical facilities, overseeing the construction and financing of new buildings. Heinstadt described it as an office job.**

**“My responsibilities were for the physical facilities, budget, finance, public safety, human resources, IT,” Heinstadt said. “It was a diverse group of responsibilities.” Now retired from the School Committee and Wentworth, Heinstadt plans to continue to live in Duxbury where he has resided for the past 38 years. However, Heinstadt is originally from Baltimore. His sports allegiance has stayed in Baltimore as his favorite team is the Baltimore Orioles. “I’m really happy with where I am today, I don’t think I would have done anything different,” he said. “Maybe a few minor things, but I don’t really have any regrets.”**

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